

Big fat boletes at Rowville, Victoria

In 1987 we built our house in an area of natural bushland in the Melbourne suburb of Rowville, where three *Eucalyptus* spp. (Long-leaved Box *E. gonicalyx*, Silver-leaved Stringybark *E. cephalocarpa* and Peppermint Gum *E. radiata*) were already well-grown (Fig. 1). It was not until 2008 that fruit-bodies of a large bolete *Phlebopus marginatus* began to appear on the ground under one of the Long-leaved Box trees (Fig. 2). This fungus has grown in the same area most years since. I didn't see it in 2012, but it reappeared in the autumn of 2013, when it also grew near the Silver-leaved Stringybark.

The fruit-bodies usually emerge during the autumn and winter months, but sometimes during spring as well. The cap is initially con-

vex, expanding to broadly convex or almost plane, sometimes with the centre a little depressed (Fig. 3). The colour is yellowish brown or brown, sometimes with a greenish or olive tinge. The surface is dry, felty or suede-like, sometimes flecked with brown or greenish brown fibrillose scales, and cracks or splits with age (Figs. 4 and 5). The thick (up to 50 mm) flesh of the pileus is a dingy whitish colour, discolouring when exposed to the air (Fig. 5). The pored underside is soft, yellow or orange-yellow, becoming brownish as the spores mature; the tubes are up to 30 mm long. The stem is very stout, swollen and bulbous, dingy yellow-brown to olive brown, and darker toward the base (Grgurinovic 1997). The stem is usually



Fig. 1. Our home in Rowville, with Long-leaved Box (centre front) and Silver-leaved Stringybark (left).



Fig. 2. Fruit-body of *Phlebopus marginatus* at the base of the Long-leaved Box.



Fig. 3. Fruit-body with depressed centre.



Fig. 4. Cracks in top of fruit-body.



Fig. 5. Split fruit-body showing discoloured flesh.

central, but sometimes eccentric (Fig. 6). The spore print is yellowish brown (Fuhrer 2005).

The fruit-bodies last for several weeks, staying in good condition for a while before cracking or becoming deeply pitted (Fig. 7) and eventually either collapsing into a liquid mess (Fig. 8) or shrivelling into black lumps (Fig. 9) or forming a black mess. A type of fly, *Tapeigaster* sp., lays its eggs on the fruit-bodies, which provide food for the maggots when they hatch (Fig. 10).

Phlebopus marginatus is found in Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and Sri Lanka (Grgurinovic 1997). It is probably Australia's largest terrestrial fungus, with some specimens exceeding 600 mm in diameter – in fact fruit-bodies up to 1 metre across have been reported. (The most recent specimen to appear in my garden measured a mere 300 x 260 mm). A weight of 29 kg was recorded for a specimen in western



Fig. 6. Fruit-body with eccentric stem.



Fig. 7. Deeply pitted fruit-body.

Victoria (Fuhrer 2005). In Australia this fungus grows on the ground, either solitary or in small groups, near eucalypts (Grgurinovic 1997).

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Virgil Hubregtse for assistance with identifying the fungus, supplying technical details and making helpful suggestions regarding the structure of this paper.

References

- Fuhrer, BA (2005) *A field guide to Australian fungi* (Blooming Books: Melbourne)
- Grgurinovic, CA (1997) *Larger fungi of South Australia* (The Botanic Gardens of Adelaide and State Herbarium and The Flora and Fauna of South Australia Handbooks Committee: Adelaide)

Anne Morton
10 Rupicola Court
Rowville, Victoria 3178



Fig. 8. Aging fruit-bodies collapsing into a liquid mess.



Fig. 9. Old fruit-body shrivelled into a black lump.



Fig. 10. Decaying fruit-body cut to reveal maggots.